United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/803
10 January 1991

THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General to travel to Baghdad to meet Iraqi President in search for peaceful solution to Gulf crisis.

- Speakers express varying views in general debate at Amendment Conference to Treaty Banning Nuclear-Weapon Tests in Atmosphere, Outer Space and under Water.

- United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East expresses regret at expulsion of four Palestinians from occupied Arab territories.

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The Spokesman for Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar announced today that the Secretary-General will leave New York tonight on a mission to Baghdad to meet Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

The Secretary-General will make a stop in Geneva tomorrow where he will meet with the 12 Foreign Ministers of the European Economic Community (EEC). That meeting, said the Spokesman, had been requested by the Foreign Minister of Luxembourg, in his capacity as President of the Community for January to July. The Secretary-General will also meet with the Foreign Minister of Yugoslavia, who is the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement. It was still not known when the Secretary-General would leave Europe for Baghdad.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar will be accompanied by his Chef de Cabinet, Under-Secretary-General Virendra Dayal; Assistant Secretary-General Jean-Claude Aime, his chief adviser on the Middle East and Persian Gulf matters; the Assistant for Special Assignments, Giandomenico Picco; and other supporting staff.

The Spokesman reported that when asked this morning about how he intended to carry out his mission, the Secretary-General had said he hoped his moral authority would have some impact. He also said that in the event of a withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait, the United Nations would obviously have a role to play. The Secretary-General was referring to an idea proposed

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to him last Monday by the Ambassadors of the five Nordic countries that a United Nations transition force go into Kuwait if Iraq was to withdraw.

It was further announced that the Secretary-General received this morning a telephone call from United States President George Bush who expressed support for his trip to Baghdad. Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev also expressed support for the mission by a message brought to the Secretary-General this morning by the Soviet Ambassador to the United Nations.

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Technological advances now made possible the effective verification of a comprehensive nuclear-test ban, according to views expressed this morning as the Amendment Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water -- also called the partial test-ban Treaty -- continued its general debate.

Speakers stressed the need to end the vicious cycle of testing in order to modernize weapons and obtain military supremacy. They noted that a comprehensive ban would help end nuclear proliferation. Several speakers said the Amendment Conference should encourage negotiations on a comprehensive test-ban in the Conference on Disarmament; others said the Amendment Conference should continue its work towards achieving a ban. Many focused on the responsibility of the depositary Powers of the Treaty -- the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom -- to work towards a comprehensive ban.

In a statement this afternoon, the representative of the United States, Mary Elizabeth Hoinhes, said her country did not support the proposed amendment to the Treaty, for both substantive and procedural reasons.

While a comprehensive test ban was a long-term goal of the United States, she said, such a ban must be seen in the context of a time when there was no need to depend on nuclear deterrence to ensure international security and stability and when broad, deep and effectively verifiable arms reductions had been achieved.

The United States relied on a credible nuclear deterrent, she said. Nuclear testing was a critical link. So long as nuclear weapons played a critical role in national security, the United States needed a sensible testing programme. To use the amendment process to create a new and wholly different treaty would be unwise. To do so could jeopardize the continued viability of the existing Treaty.

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Commissioner-General Giorgio Giacomelli of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) yesterday expressed deep regret that Israel carried out on 8 January the expulsion of four Palestinians from the occupied Arab territory.

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The deportations were carried out after lawyers for the defendants dropped their appeal on the grounds that they were not given enough information about the charges. The four men were then taken by Israeli army helicopter to southern Lebanon.

Mr. Giacomelli said the expulsions were not only in violation of international conventions but could also result in a heightening of tensions in the region.

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